

Buddha (Part II)

Sources of Cr. Power

. . . . The flesh will die anyhow, as the Buddha will die. He knows that. We do not have to accelerate the process. We gain nothing by it, against all the mythological teachings of the Indians. The most refined metaphysical speculation of the Indians was the division between spirit and body -- actual spiritualization (Not as the Hebrews used it ?)

. . . . there is something transcendent. Here the spirit is something immanent. The spirit is the finest substance in the world. This finest substance we have to be, to become in Hindu philosophy. We become that. Why? Mortifying our flesh, becoming absolutely spiritualized -- and what do we gain by it? We gain power by it. Power, endless power -- even over the Gods. We gain power; we become the most powerful beings.

The whole teaching of Hindu philosophy and Hindu myth is a teaching of power -- only they do not say so. This makes the turn of the Buddha possible and that makes Buddha the greatest philosopher against the concept of power. He accepts this world of the Hindus and says, "Yes, this is the world, this is how the world is -- but that is just why it is meaningless." The whole thing has no meaning. The whole thing is nothing but a permanent accumulation of power, and what does power do? It brings sorrow and suffering. So being is nothing but suffering; it is meaningless; it pro-

duces only suffering. To get out of it, to overcome it does not mean to destroy it, to destroy our flesh; it means to reach a position where the infinitely turning wheel of existence and being cannot grasp us any more, where it has to turn without us. This position is a position of transcendence. Is it a position of transcendence in another world? It is not. Buddha does not use transcendence -- as Lao-tse does not, as Socrates does not, as all the philosophers we will be talking about in this course never do -- (only the later metaphysicians do.)

They never try to establish another world that is absolutely different and is transcendent, which we could reach; they only say a truth which they think they can account for: namely, that ~~only say that truth which~~ we can by thinking and living transcend this world here; we can get out of it; we can reach a position where we can judge it; where we are not contained in it any more, where it has no entire power over us any more. This Buddha calls deliverance, deliverance from the wheel of being, from the wheel of existence. The state to be reached is nirvāṇa, extinction of the fire in ourselves, of the fire that brings us compulsorily into this permanent and eternal stream. Now he uses a picture for that: the picture of the ferry boat. His teaching, dharma, is supposed to be the ferry boat. We live in this world, in this being and now we have to cross a river to a far shore. We

When we reach it, then we will have forgotten the other shore: that means the fire will be gone and we will be in the fullness of mind, in the full awareness of meaning.

The discipline he teaches -- if you look into the Pāli texts only -- is a discipline that is almost nothing but intellectual exercise. We can skip the whole wonder-world of Indian and Asiatic myth that has crept back into the teaching of Buddhism. In the original teaching of the Buddha all that is not existent. Those are almost psychological teachings. He is not concerned with any so-called metaphysical proposition; he rejects in his talks every attempt to explain the universe; the question if man is a microcosm and this is a macrocosm does not interest him at all. He declines to talk about such things. We will later see how Socrates laughs when he is accused that he was searching into things under the earth and in heaven. He was never concerned about those things. The question if the stars are Gods or stones was entirely irrelevant to him because if they were Gods they would^{also} be immanent Gods and how are immanent Gods better than stones. It is entirely uninteresting; it is only interesting for scientists who want to move the stars. That is a fine thing, but it doesn't teach a thing about how man can be free and happy. Buddha formulates it already almost the same way. He ironizes those people who ask those questions: Let's stick to the Self, make the Self your refuge;

it is all in yourself; if you don't find it in your Self you will never find the path. So he teaches them how to get rid, of the individual self in order to become a Self. Here he is a psychologist almost as great as Ignatius of Loyola when he trains the Jesuits by telling them: "Now you go this path of Golgotha, imagine as you go you have the cross on your shoulder, now you sweat, the blood is coming out of your ears, you suffer, you break down, you are the one, you are the one." Those are the Jesuits teaching psychologically -- by imagination.

Buddha does the same thing; he teaches by imagination. The monk sits now, you forget you have a hand, your hand is away, the other hand goes away, your feet go away. Abstract from this, from that, and that -- an endless line of abstraction. And then abstract from what is called yourself, and now he teaches, all the so-called capabilities of the mind are still compulsions, are still only effects of being, including consciousness. Consciousness is also only a mirror of ^{things} ~~things~~ that happen; you are still not free; you are still not thinking. Now you think; you think the moment you have discarded all reality; then you are not in the abstract, but then you are real; now you are thinking. Most of the discourses take this line. He teaches, and that has brought him under suspicion that he is an ethical preacher, he teaches certain prescriptions, but they become ethical finally by the

action of man. The kernel of his teaching is that there is a four-fold, so to speak, truth; this four-fold truth, if we consider it, leads us to the eight-fold path of deliverance.

The four-fold truth is that all being is sorrow, all being is suffering; as long as we are contained in being we suffer because being can only amount to suffering by being a permanent accumulation of power; all being is suffering. Then, to partake in this suffering comes from ignorance, because we do not see through being. The third truth -- it is a question: 'Is there a possibility to be delivered?' 'Yes, there is.' 'What is this possibility?' -- the fourth truth: 'The eight-fold path of deliverance.' The noble eight-fold path is right view, right aspiration, right speech, right conduct, right means of livelihood, right endeavor, right mindfulness, and right contemplation. Very simple. It sounds like nothing -- but what does 'right' mean? Right view, right aspiration, right speech, right conduct, right means of livelihood, right endeavor, right mindfulness, and right contemplation.

The Buddha acted all those and perhaps by his actions we can come nearer to what he means by right. He acted, as many of his monks later, as mediator in those endless struggles of Indian politics between the little kings, of whom he himself had been one before he renounced it, and when he does that he has always one question: He says, "Do you think it reasonable to this or that?" And then he convinces them that

it is not reasonable. So right means reasonable, reasoned -- but what is that -- reasoned. Reasoned is the capability of human beings to set themselves free aims for their actions. Those aims where they really are free because they determine themselves; things that they want to be in order that being might get meaning. Buddha talks about righteousness almost as much as Abraham does -- righteousness is brought into the world by man if man goes this eight-fold path, which means speak only for reason, have reasonable views, reasonable conduct -- it means control yourself, do nothing without a definite reason, check your motives. This motive can be unfree, if you don't check it; you are motivated -- namely, by being.

That is what he calls fire and lust -- I want to do that, I want to do that -- psychologically expressed. This is fire, this is lust, this is not free. The being in all beings that is the unfreest one in Buddha's opinion is the human being if it does not free itself. As long as it is merely an individual, it is, so to speak, the best, most sensitive reactive being to the commands of being. That means the biggest slave possible -- that being that in addition to everything else has consciousness and therefore, is more slave than a stone because it has, in addition to it, consciousness, and knows that it is a slave and even tries to enjoy it, and sometimes enjoys it. That is the

great sin for the Buddha.

We have the possibility of self-motivation. That is now this higher Self. What is this higher Self, this Self-motivation. Self-motivation is only if we act according to motives that are reasons for the meaning of the world. If we put meaning into the world -- that means if we act, for instance, righteously, then we act in a way as being cannot ever act. No being, including the human individual, and mostly the human individual, has any possibility of acting in righteousness as long as the human individual doesn't become this Self, which has the possibility to act in righteousness; that means to do something that in the whole concept of being is not foreseen; that is not in it; something that he can make up himself. Now we have to develop love for those things, for those motives which are ultimate motives. Let's put it into the terms of modern psychology and modern philosophy. So then with those terms I would say: all beings act by ulterior motives (only they don't know it); human beings, as far as they are merely beings, individuals, act also by ulterior motives -- and more than others because they do it consciously. The human being, as far as it can be, namely, a person, a Self, can act by ultimate motives. It can devise ultimate motives. Righteousness is an ultimate motive. Acting for those ultimate motives is human freedom. As soon as we act for ultimate motives we do not act for reward. That can be taken away from us again as soon as we start to

believe that this our possibility of transcendence -- namely, to act for ultimate motives -- will be rewarded by another world which is a transcendent world in which we come and there we will enjoy that we have acted according to ultimate motives; and that means we have also acted according to ulterior motives and are not free any more.

So the condition of freedom of man consists in not making the metaphysical assumption that there are eternal ideas or a world of eternal ideas, or a world of heaven, or God -- another world where we get our punishment or our rewards. We are free only because we do not know of such a world -- though we cannot deny that it might exist. But it is a blessing that we do not know if it exists because if we knew that it exists then we could not be free because it would mean that in our life we would always act according to ulterior motives. That man can be a giver, as Lao-tse found already -- now Buddha finds out again for the second time: namely, somebody -- not something -- who adds something to being and to the world and out of his own free will because he wants it so, because he is a creator of value -- not a value, he is a creator of value, he is an evaluator.

So the eight-fold path means activity. We have already seen in Lao-tse that Lao-tse was only against the busy-body activities of the world; he was for the quiet activities, the ~~quiet~~ creative activities. This permanent adding of benevolence,

goodness, creativeness to the world -- that was where he felt free -- that was his happy tidings he brought to the world. Buddha also brings a happy tidings: the tidings that we can create, that we can go a path where no compulsion has any power over us any more, where we are out of the senseless and meaningless wheel of power performances and bring into the world things of our own, which we love, which we can love, which only we can conceive of -- aims, definite aims being brought into the world. But this does not come really out in Buddha's teaching. It is hard to discover it here. Only if we take into consideration also what Buddha and the earliest monks did, then we see it. But it is not the purpose of the Buddha. The main purpose he does that is not for ethical reasons, or for any reasons of bettering; he does that only because this is the only means for man to become absolutely independent of the wheel of power; he does it only for the sake of man himself, of the Self. He wants to establish the absolute independence of man.

And here we have a space and time indication again, a change of the concept of time first. Buddha is the first who in Indian thinking has a concept of eternity. For eternity he says nirvāṇa; by eternity he does not mean an endless infinite state of something, or of the mind or something. What he means is -- it could also be only a moment like the lotus flower, the moment is decisive -- a timeless element,

a sphere of another quality -- that is what he means; being above things. This being above things and being above being, which puts meaning into being, he reaches by a strange process and it is so obvious after many years of studying those things, one finally discovers it. It couldn't have been different and nevertheless one never knew it really. He always uses the term "the wheel." So the nothingness, the nirvāṇa, which is not nothingness but this absolute otherness -- let's call it that way: Absolute otherness -- if we use the term of the wheel then it can, of course only be the center.

We are always misled by this other picture he uses constantly: namely, the crossing the stream that gives to our thinking, which is Christian, always at once the image of a transcendental world into which we can enter, another world which we reach on this other shore -- but we are quite mistaken about that. In India that doesn't mean that at all. This is a very, very simple symbol he uses. One crosses the river in order to be in another country. This river is to be crossed in order to come into another state of mind -- that is all there is to it. This other state of mind is not to be reached by crossing a river; it is to be reached by unfettering oneself from the wheel and that is done -- if one analyzes some of the original discourses of the Buddha and I mentioned this one where he says, "Forget your hand, forget this, etc." This is done by refusing every kind of in-

volvement, more and more loosening one's self from involvements in the world; that means unfortunately in Buddhistic practice, has meant even with the Buddha -- that's the price he paid -- a certain shedding of responsibilities.

The original feeling of the Buddha that being tired of being because being was meaningless was so tremendous that he, as a young man -- and the legend in that respect is certainly true -- left his wife and child and when his child was born he said, "A fetter has been forged for me" -- a fetter, a new fetter. He couldn't become independent, he couldn't become free. He saw in everything for a human being only a fetter one had to get rid of. It does not mean that Buddhism later and he himself and his monks haven't done much good to humanity, to human beings, but never with the conviction that this was the main purpose.

The main purpose was always a merely personal one and he says to every of his students, "You take care of your own deliverance." The connection runs differently. It runs this way -- that if I take care of my own deliverance and act only for ultimate motives and disentangle myself from being, though I do first negatively a great good to humanity and to my fellow human beings: namely, I do not involve them, I do not put fetters on them. This is not asceticism in the Buddha. He does not mean to mortify the flesh. He merely means we have to gain at any price the time for this inner contemplation that can bring us into this center of

being from which we judge, and from where we can really live. So please don't misunderstand me. I am not preaching Buddha's doctrine here. We are not looking into those matters in order to find that we have here the truth; we are looking into them only in order to find out how absolutely lonely great human persons, the first ones after the breakdown of the mythical world, have discovered creative possibilities in man.

So Buddha discovers one of the great creative possibilities and almost the condition sine qua non for creative capabilities in man. That is what he has to teach us. His path itself can be reviled. We can say many things against that. This is not a doctrine and he himself did not want it to be a doctrine -- that must finally be said for him. He always said, "If you can find another way and first you have to find your own way, go your own way of deliverance." He didn't want pupils, he didn't want disciples, really. What he wanted were human beings who would try the same path that he tried and achieve the same results. But on that we will have to speak in the next session.